

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

EB-07 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01

INT-05 FEA-01 /039 W

----- 106774

R 110734Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3993

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMCONSUL DURBAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 1101

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ETRD KAIR SF US

SUBJ: SAFAIR REQUEST TO FLY MINE LABOR TO AND FROM RHODESIA

REF: (A) STATE 52920, (B) PRETORIA 0849

1. ON MARCH 9 EMBOFF MET WITH MR. ROBIN CLARK, WHO CURRENTLY IN CHARGE OF OBTAINING FUTURE LABOR NEEDS FOR MINE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS LTD., (A NEW NAME FOR WNLA BUT STILL REFERRED TO AS "WENELA") WHICH IS PART OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHAMBER OF MINES, TO DISCUSS USE OF SAFAIR FOR TRANSPORTATION OF MINE WORKERS FROM SURROUNDING COUNTRIES. MR. CLARK STATED THAT THEY PLANNING TO HAVE SAFAIR TRANSPORT UP TO 400,000 MINE WORKERS PER YEAR FOR THEM BY LATE 1970'S FROM SURROUNDING COUNTRIES AND SHOWED EMBOFF LARGE DOCUMENT ENTITLED FUTURE OPERATIONS OF WENELA AIR LIFT DATED 7 JANUARY 1976. DOCUMENT CONTAINED SEVERAL TABLES SHOWING BUILDUP OVER NEXT FEW YEARS OF MINE LABOR TO BE FLOWN TO SOUTH AFRICA. TABLE FOR 1980 SHOWED FOLLOWING: ZULULAND - 20,000; TRANSKEI/CISKEI - 130,000; OTHER LOCAL - 20,000; LESOTHO - 80,000; BOTSWANA - 30,000; SWAZILAND - 5,000; MALAWI - 30,000; RHODESIA - 20,000; MOZAMBIQUE - 70,000; ANGOLA - 30,000; CONFIDENTIAL

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30,000; RHODESIA - 20,000; MOZAMBIQUE - 70,000; ANGOLA -

5,000. MR. CLARK READILY ADMITTED THAT SOME OF THESE PREDICTIONS DEPENDED ON CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH HOST COUNTRY AS WELL AS FUTURE POLITICAL CLIMATE, PARTICULARLY IN CASE OF ANGOLA AND RHODESIA.

2. MR. CLARK STATED THAT WENELA HAS OPERATED ITS OWN AIR SERVICE, WENELA AIR SERVICE, FOR NUMBER OF YEARS TO TRANSPORT BLACK MINE WORKERS TO AND FROM THEIR HOMES. TRANSPORTATION BY AIR WAS USED TO ENABLE MINE WORKERS' CONTRACTS TO BE SHORTENED SO THEY COULD RETURN HOME FOR LEAVE SOONER. THIS RESULTED IN MINERS BEING HAPPIER, SINCE THEY COULD RETURN HOME MORE OFTEN AND FASTER, AND THEREFORE MORE LIKELY TO BECOME PERMANENT MEMBER OF WORK FORCE AND A BETTER RISK FOR TRAINING INTO MORE ADVANCED JOBS. WITH RISING COSTS FOR MINE EQUIPMENT AND LABOR, FACTOR OF KEEPING MORE PERMANENT AND BETTER TRAINED WORK FORCE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT AND CHAMBER OF MINES HAS DECIDED TO MAKE GREATER USE OF AIR TRANSPORTATION FOR LABOR. WENELA AIR SERVICE, HOWEVER, CURRENTLY OPERATES OLD DC-3 AND DC-4 AIRCRAFT, WHICH ARE VERY CLOSE TO END OF THEIR USEFUL LIFE, AND ARE NOT CAPABLE OF EVEN MAINTAINING CURRENT AIRLIFT CAPABILITY, LET ALONE INCREASED SERVICE. WENELA HAS DECIDED, THEREFORE, TO CONTRACT FOR AIRLIFT WITH SAFAIR.

3. FOR 1976, MR. CLARK STATED THAT WENELA WANTS SAFAIR TO BEGIN ON 1 MAY TO TRANSPORT 15 TO 20,000 WORKERS FROM BOTSWANA AND 25 TO 30,000 WORKERS FROM RHODESIA. NEAR END OF 1976, THEY EXPECT ADDITIONAL 100,000 WORKERS WILL BE TRANSPORTED FROM TRANSKEI AND CISKEI AS WELL AS 110,000 WORKERS FROM MOZAMBIQUE IF CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS ARE SUCCESSFUL. REASON FOR AIR TRANSPORTING MOZAMBIQUE WORKERS IS THAT FRELIMO GOVERNMENT NOW INSISTING THAT ALL MINE WORKERS FROM MOZAMBIQUE BE TRANSPORTED ON TRAINS WITH SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ALL. SOUTH AFRICAN RAILWAYS NOT ABLE TO MEET THIS REQUIREMENT AND ONLY WAY AROUND IT APPEARS TO BE BY USING AIRCRAFT TO TRANSPORT WORKERS.

4. EMBOFF ALSO TALKED WITH ANTON LOMBARD, DIRECTOR OF SAFAIR, ABOUT FLIGHTS TO RHODESIA ON 9 MARCH. LOMBARD TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE WOULD PUT TWO AIRCRAFT FULL-TIME ON CONFIDENTIAL

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TRANSPORTATION OF MINE WORKERS FROM BOTSWANA AND RHODESIA AND THAT ABOUT SIX AIRCRAFT FULL-TIME WOULD PROBABLY BE NEEDED ONCE SAFAIR TRANSPORTING FULL 400,000 WORKERS PER YEAR. HE STATED THAT PREVIOUS FIGURE OF FOUR AIRCRAFT WAS WHAT HE THOUGHT HE WOULD NEED BY END OF 1976 WHEN HE EXPECTED TO BE TRANSPORTING BETWEEN 200,000 AND 300,000 WORKERS. MR. LOMBARD PLANS ON TAKING WENELA CONTRACT REGARDLESS OF WHETHER HE

CAN FLY HIS L-100'S INTO RHODESIA SINCE CONTRACT VERY LUCRATIVE. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT SITUATION IN RHODESIA HAS CHANGED DRASTICALLY WITHIN LAST SEVERAL WEEKS, AND HE BELIEVES THAT EITHER THERE WILL BE A SETTLEMENT, IN WHICH CASE HE ASSUMES RESTRICTIONS ON FLYING INTO RHODESIA WOULD BE LIFTED, OR LEVEL OF WARFARE WILL INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY, IN WHICH CASE HE WOULD NOT FLY INTO RHODESIA AT ALL. DURING INTERIM PERIOD, HOWEVER, HE IN QUANDRY ON BEST COURSE OF ACTION. IF HE CANNOT FLY HIS L-100'S INTO RHODESIA, HE WILL HAVE TO LEASE AN AIRPLANE, PROBABLY A FOKKER F-27, FOR THAT RUN, WHICH WOULD BE VERY EXPENSIVE SINCE WOULD REQUIRE SPARE PARTS, PILOT TRAINING, ETC. IF THERE SETTLEMENT OR INCREASED WAR, THIS MONEY WOULD HAVE BEEN WASTED COMPLETELY. HE NOW ASKING, THEREFORE, THAT HE BE GIVEN APPROVAL TO FLY L-100'S INTO RHODESIA FOR JUST SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, SAY FOR TWO TO THREE MONTHS, UNTIL SITUATION THERE BECOMES CLEARER. HE WILLING TO HAVE EMBASSY INSPECT HIS OPERATIONS INTO RHODESIA, WILLING TO REPAINT AIRCRAFT OR ANYTHING ELSE DEPT MAY REQUIRE. IF NECESSARY, HE WOULD THEN LEASE APPROPRIATE AIRPLANE TO USE IN PLACE OF L-100'S. LOMBARD COMMENTED THAT HE STILL NEGOTIATING WITH SAA ON PURCHASE OF TWO BOEING 707'S, BUT THAT SAA HAS NOT DECIDED YET WHETHER TO RETURN AIRPLANES TO BOEING OR SELL TO SAFAIR.

5. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT DEPT SHOULD DECLINE SAFAIR'S REQUEST TO FLY ITS L-100'S INTO RHODESIA SINCE APPROVAL WOULD INVOLVE U.S. IN SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE WITH RHODESIA (ALBEIT IN IMPORTING LABOR). WHILE IT WOULD BE WISE TO HOLD THE LINE ON L-100 FLIGHTS TO RHODESIA IN ANY CASE, THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MIGRATORY WORKERS, GOLD, SUPPLEMENTAL AIRLINES, MINING INDUSTRY, AIR ROUTES, FLIGHT CLEARANCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchant0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PRETOR01101
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760094-0769
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760371/aaaacknq.tel
Line Count: 154
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 52920, 76 PRETORIA 849
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <14 OCT 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAFAIR REQUEST TO FLY MINE LABOR TO AND FROM RHODESIA
TAGS: PFOR, ETRD, EAIR, SF, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006